

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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1. Fewer Walleyes Caught During 2003 Brood Fish Collection
2. Plan Now for Upcoming Free Camping Weekend
3. Spring Trout Fishing – by Joe Wilkinson
4. DNR Spring Sale Set for May 10
5. Boat Registrations Due by April 30
6. Iowa Fishing Report

FEWER WALLEYES CAUGHT DURING 2003 BROOD FISH COLLECTION

DES MOINES – The strange weather in late March and early April may be to blame for the 40 percent decline in walleyes caught during the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) annual brood fish collection.

“The fish are there, we just didn’t catch the spawn at its peak,” said Mike Mason, supervisor of the DNR’s fish hatcheries. Fisheries workers use water temperature and the sun’s photoperiod to try to calculate the best time to begin collecting fish. But this spring has been anything but ordinary.

“This was a strange year,” Mason said. “We had a warm up, a cold front, then another warm up. That could have caused some fish to spawn during the first warm up.”

Mason also said algae problems at Clear Lake and extreme wind conditions made it difficult to net fish.

“Our egg collection estimates show a decline of about 13 percent compared to an average year,” Mason said. “We will have fish to stock, but not the extra that we had last year.”

The DNR collects walleyes at the Iowa Great Lakes, Storm Lake, Clear Lake and Lake Rathbun each year to provide walleye fishing to Iowa anglers.

Mason said the eggs will begin hatching this week and fisheries crews will be stocking these newly hatched walleye fry in Iowa lakes. The eggs will continue hatching over the next two weeks and fry will be stocked as they are available. Fry are stocked by the millions in lakes because the survival rate is around one percent.

Other fry will remain at the Spirit Lake, Rathbun, Mt. Ayr and Fairport hatcheries and grown to different sizes before being stocked in lakes and streams. These larger walleyes have a much higher survival rate.

The DNR will stock roughly 105 million walleye fry and 1.25 million fingerlings this year.

| Location | Quarts collected 2003 | Quarts collected 2002 |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Great Lakes | 207 | 223 |
| Storm Lake | 226 | 267 |
| Clear Lake | 271 | 474 |
| Lake Rathbun | 404 | 308 |

For more information, contact Mason at 515-281-6072.

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PLAN NOW FOR UPCOMING FREE CAMPING WEEKEND

DES MOINES - Iowa's state parks, recreation areas and forests are readying for the upcoming free camping weekend May 2 to 4. This is the second year the Department of Natural Resources has offered a free camping weekend to Iowans.

"The idea behind free camping weekend is to entice more Iowans to camp on a regular basis," said Kevin Szcodronski, interim chief of the DNR's parks bureau.

The DNR has also scheduled interpretive programs at each of the parks. Activities vary from park to park, and include nature hikes, campfire cooking and wildlife talks.

"We are excited about the upcoming camping season and hope to see our parks full of campers this weekend," Szcodronski said.

Information about free camping weekend is available at exploreiowaparks.com.

Nonresidents may also camp this weekend, but are required to pay the appropriate fee.

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SPRING TROUT FISHING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The swish of silver was too tempting. The trout chomped it and Tom Birmingham had his first catch of the morning. Hoisting the fish over a tangle of tree trunk and branches, Birmingham took a look, before releasing it back into the stream.

The trout had not been in the stream long. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fisheries technician Tom Rohde had just dropped a dozen or so rainbow and brook trout into the pool staked out by Birmingham, of Marion, and his friend Sean Phillips, of Cedar Rapids, at the east end of Fountain Spring county park, near Greeley. "I'm just using a little tinsel jig. I think they sell these in stores, but I tie a few trout jigs myself," said Birmingham, admitting that it didn't seem to matter what he used on stocking day. "Actually, I like going in the winter, when there are fewer people around. Days like today are a little crazy."

It definitely was *not* a quiet day at the ol' fishing hole. Rohde had 16 or 17 spots where he rationed out the 300 trout he had brought from the Manchester hatchery. This is one of 50 'put and take' streams, managed by the DNR. And it was crowded. Some of the regulars greeted him by name, as he came down the bank with a dozen trout and slipped them into the cold water. If he paused to talk for a minute, the first trout was usually caught by the time he made his way back to the truck.

The half-pound, hatchery-raised trout are more 'angler friendly' than their wild cousins, in Iowa's trout country. Streams in nine northeast counties run clear and cold enough to support trout. Only a few high quality stretches support actual reproduction. Otherwise, the trout are spawned, raised and then stocked out of Manchester and two rearing stations, near Elkader and Decorah.

About 30 thousand trout anglers pay for the added expense through purchase of their \$10 trout 'stamps', as they buy fishing licenses each year. Then they adjust the degree of difficulty to catch them. Bits of cheese, prepared pellet baits, even sweet corn kernels, usually work best, to fill a daily limit of five trout. Small night crawlers are popular, too. Others rely on a host of tiny jigs, trying to simulate natural food in the stream, to coax a bite from a suspicious trout.

Whatever they use, the 'put and take' streams draw crowds during the stocking season, from April through November. Rohde counted about 60 anglers at Fountain Spring, the day we stocked there. And it wasn't just the anglers who were crowded. "Water conditions right now are very low," noted Rohde. "That actually concentrates the fish in the pools, making them easier to catch. We need a good rain to increase water levels."

Many of the trout enthusiasts are retirees, enjoying a morning in the outdoors before taking a few fish home. Others, like Birmingham, trade a day of work for the scenery and—sometimes—the solitude. Terry Hoffman, of Solon, started trout fishing with her husband a year ago. “I love it,” she laughs, right after pulling in her first trout of the day. “I like the surroundings. It’s peaceful, relaxing...just fun.”

And if you don’t enjoy the crowd scene, there are alternatives. Some anglers come the day after a stream is stocked, trying to fool one of the remaining ‘educated’ trout. Others know they’ll be almost alone, coming the day *before* the next stocking. Perhaps the best alternative, though, is changing locations. “If you want to get away from the crowd, try one of the streams on our unannounced schedule,” suggests Rohde. “We stock them with brown trout, usually twice a month. They generally have very few anglers and a lot of fish. Those streams are beautiful places to fish, too.”

Those unannounced or ‘walk in’ streams are shown in the DNR’s Iowa Trout Guide, available at most DNR offices and at fishing shops that cater to trout fishing.

Brown trout adapt quickly to the wild and are a little harder to catch. Then again, you have all day to enjoy the bluffs, woods, coldwater streams and solitude. What’s your hurry?

Trout Stocking Underway

Northeast Iowa’s 50 ‘put and take’ streams are stocked from one to three times a week, depending on angler pressure. For information on which streams are stocked, go to www.iowadnr.com or call:

563-927-5736 (Manchester)

563-245-1699 (Elkader)

563-382-3315 (Decorah)

Crappies Coming On

Warming water mean crappie fishing is heating up. One of Iowa’s most popular game fish, crappies move into the shallows to spawn when water temperatures hold steady in the mid to upper 50 degree range. Activity generally moves from south to north through Iowa.

That means good fishing, as anglers locate them during the pre-spawn and as they move in to lay their eggs. “They’re not quite ready to spawn here,” reports DNR fisheries biologist Paul Sleeper, at Lake Macbride in east central Iowa. “A two to three degree temperature change will bring them into the shallows, following the baitfish. We have lots of anglers along the causeway, and (Coralville Lake) dam and lots of boats out. Those water temperatures might hit 60 or so in the shallows during the day, but cool temperatures and rain can push it back down into the 40s overnight.”

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DNR SPRING SALE SET FOR MAY 10

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR will hold a spring auction Saturday, May 10, at the Cattle Barn on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The gates open at 8 a.m. and the auction will begin around 9 a.m. Items up for auction include firearms, boats, outboard motors, chainsaws, mowers, trailers, farm and office equipment and more. The items are sold “as is” with no guarantee or warranty.

The public may view the items for sale from May 7 to 9, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Any person interested in purchasing a firearm at the auction must have either a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, a federal firearms license, or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons. The Iowa permit to acquire can be obtained from a sheriff’s office. Allow two to three weeks to receive the permit.

Payment must be made on auction day. All sales are final. Firearms must be removed from the site within one half hour after the sale of the firearm is completed. All other items must be removed from the sale site after full payment is made.

Sales taxes will be collected. Boats, snowmobiles, trailers and vehicles will pay taxes to the proper county office when registering those items.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time. To receive a copy of the sale bill, send a self addressed stamped envelop to Surplus Sale, Iowa DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

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BOAT REGISTRATIONS DUE BY APRIL 30

DES MOINES – Boat and personal watercraft owners are required to renew the registration of their vessels by April 30. Registration fees vary depending on the size of the vessel and are paid to the county recorder in the county where the owner resides. Failure to display current registration is a simple misdemeanor.

Iowa’s recreational boating activities continue to grow each year. Registration fees are used to support Iowa’s boating enforcement and safety program.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of April 29, 2003

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Southwest

Three Mile (Union): Anglers are catching walleyes and some muskies off the face of the dam. Channel catfish are being caught at north end. Fishing is good for crappies over rocky areas and trees around the creek channel. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish is good at the north end. Walleye fishing is good along the face of the dam. Crappies are moving into rocks and trees adjacent to creek channels. Anglers are catching lots of yellow bass. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Viking (Montgomery): Crappies and bluegills are being caught near the concession and pontoon areas of the lake.

Cold Springs (Cass): Anglers are beginning to catch crappies and channel catfish.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Crappie and bluegill fishing is good along the shallows and lagoons on jigs and minnows. Anglers are also picking up a few bullheads.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is good for 7-inch crappies using jigs and minnows along the dam.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Anglers are beginning to catch crappies and catfish.

Big Creek Lake (Polk): Walleye fishing has been good using lead-headed jigs and minnows, although most fish are sub-legal sized. Channel catfish fishing has been good, for 2 to 3 pound fish. Crappie fishing has improved with the better fishing in the 'Lost Lake' area. Fish have been in 10 to 15 feet of water.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing is fair using hooks and minnows. Most fish are being caught in 15 to 18 feet of water. Largemouth bass fishing has been good using top-water lures around shoreline structure.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and redear fishing has been picking up as the water warms, with most fish being caught on night crawlers or wax worms. Crappies are being caught using crappie jigs and/or wax worms or worms. Largemouth bass – primarily sub-legalized fish – are being caught on crankbaits.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Some bluegill and redear have been caught with most fish in the 12 to 15 feet of water. Some largemouth bass are being caught on crankbaits, although as in Lake Ahquabi, most fish are sub-legal.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been excellent – from shore or boat – using jigs and minnows. Most fish are 9 to 10 inches. Largemouth bass fishing has been good using top-water lures.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has remained slow, with most anglers using wax worms. A few largemouth bass have been taken along the face of the dam.

Saylorville Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has picked up in the marina area of the lake. Most reports indicate anglers are using micro-jigs and wax worms, or bobber and minnow combinations.

Lake Red Rock (Marion): Crappie and white bass/wiper fishing has been good in the tailwater from Lake Red Rock using jigs and/or minnows. Crappie fishing has been slow to fair near the Highway 14 Bridge.

Des Moines River (Polk): White bass/wiper fishing has been excellent below Scott Street Dam in Des Moines, with fish in the 12 to 15 inch size range. Anglers are catching some walleyes at various points on the river, with the best success in and below pools and dams.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Lake Darling (Washington): Water temperature is in the upper 50s, which is still a little cool for the crappies. The water is clear and the lake is full and with warm weather, the crappie fishing should be good with lots of 10-inch fish.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Last weekend's warm weather started to bring the crappies into the shallows. Anglers have been having the best success on minnows and bobbers; however, it is still a little early for the best fishing.

Lake Geode (Henry): Still needs some warmer weather to get the water temperature up. A few crappies are starting to be caught near the habitat in deeper water.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have started biting on jigs and minnows, suspended in about 9 feet of water. The channel catfish fishing has been best using night crawlers.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial presentations, such as spinner baits and crankbaits. Crappies have been biting on small jigs. Channel catfish have been hitting on night crawlers and liver.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been slow due to the recent rains. Small jigs tipped with a wax worm or a chunk of night crawler has been the bait of choice.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Crappies have been hitting on small jigs. A few walleyes are being caught using crankbaits. Largemouth bass have been hitting on a variety of artificial lures.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Crappie fishing continues to be fair fishing from shore below the Macbride Dam. Boat anglers are picking up a few crappies throughout the reservoir. Anglers also report catching crappies below Coralville Dam. Channel catfishing has been fair in deeper areas with shallow water nearby on dead shad and shad guts.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been fair in deeper water on jigs and or minnows.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): An occasional crappie has been caught in deeper water on jigs and minnows.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Crappie fishing has been fair off the brush piles on jigs. Anglers are reminded that minnow use is prohibited in Diamond Lake.

Lake Iowa (Iowa): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been fair throughout the lake and around brush piles.

Wapsipinicon River (Jones): Walleye, northern pike and smallmouth bass fishing have been fair on artificial and live baits throughout the river.

Iowa River (Louisa): Catfish are biting on shad guts and night crawlers. A few anglers are also having some luck using stink baits. Try off the sandbars in the evenings where the water has warmed up after a warm day.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): A few white bass and walleyes are being picked up below the Oakland Mills Dam. Yellow or white twister tails seem to be working the best. Catfishing is good to fair on shad guts and night crawlers.

Farm Ponds: Bluegill and bass fishing has been good in shallow parts of farm ponds on jigs and live bait.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River: Water temperature at Guttenberg is 57 degrees and water level in Pool 10 is 613.2 and rising. Water levels are expected to crest early this week. **Pools 9-11** are fair for bluegills, rock bass, crappies and yellow perch. Concentrate your efforts along the rocks and tailwaters of the dams using minnows, worms or wax worms suspended under a bobber. Smallmouth bass fishing is good on jigs and minnows in **Pools 9-11**. Freshwater drum and redhorse are biting on night crawlers fished in the current in **Pools 9-11** and largemouth bass are biting in the backwater lakes on artificial lures. **Pool 12** is high but fishable. Some walleye are being caught at the mouth of Catfish Creek using 3-ways and jigs tipped with leeches. O'Learys Lake is good for white bass on beetle spins and crappies on minnows. Browns Lake in **Pool 13** is good for bluegills and crappies fishing minnows or a small worm in the flooded timber. Middle and South Sabula Lakes (Pool 13) are good for largemouth bass on spinner baits and bluegills on small worms or wax worms. **Pool 14** is also producing catches of crappies and bluegills in the flooded timbers on minnows or small worms, and channel catfish are biting on cut shad.

Cedar (Bremer and Black Hawk), **West Fork Cedar** (Butler and Black Hawk) and **Shell Rock rivers** (Butler, Bremer and Black Hawk): Smallmouth bass fishing is good on spinner baits or jig and twister tails tipped with a minnow. Channel catfish are biting frogs, night crawlers and dead minnows fished off the bottom.

Volga River (Fayette): Smallmouth bass are biting on crankbaits.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Yellow and white bass fishing is good below the Lake Delhi Dam on minnows fished under a slip bobber. Channel catfish are good on cut baits, night crawlers and dead minnows fished off the bottom in the Maquoketa River and Lake Delhi. Channel catfish are good on cut bait, night crawlers and dead minnows.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Crappie fishing is good in the early morning or late evening hours fishing minnows under a slip bobber around structure in 3 to 4 feet of water.

South Prairie Lake and East Lake (Black Hawk): Crappie fishing is picking up using ice jigs tipped with wax worms or minnows fished under a slip bobber.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Crappie fishing is good on minnows floated under a bobber. Some bluegills are being caught off the brush piles.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Crappie fishing is good on jigs tipped with a minnow.

Trout streams are clear and trout fishing is excellent. For current trout stocking information, contact the Big Spring Hatchery at 563-245-1699, Decorah Hatchery at 563-382-3315 or Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-5736. You can also view the trout stocking calendar on-line by going to www.iowadnr.com, clicking on **Fish and Fishing** and then choosing **Favorite Pages**.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are catching lots of crappies and a few bluegills at the Grade and Templar Park areas. Sorting is required to keep a mess of eaters. Small jigs tipped with a wax worm suspended below a bobber works well. Bullhead activity has begun with large fish being caught from the Grade. This will improve as the water temperature warms. Smallmouth bass fishing is excellent. Fish the rocky areas. The best action is on calm, sunny days.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching crappies at the trestle, Triboji, at the harbor and in the canals. The best presentation is a slip bobber and a small crappie jig about 6 to 10 inches below. Some largemouth bass are being caught along the shallows of the lake using a rattletrap and spinner bait.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Anglers fishing from shore after dark are catching some walleyes. Use a leech under a lighted bobber for the best results. There are good numbers of 14 to 17 inch walleyes in the lake.

Lost Island Lake (Clay and Palo Alto): Bullhead fishing will improve as the weather warms.

Five Island Lake (Palo Alto): There is an excellent crop of 16 to 19-inch walleyes in Five Island. Public access is available on the south side of the lake, but there are good opportunities fishing north of the bridge.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Fishing is excellent for walleye using twisters tipped with a night crawler or drifting a crawler harness with night crawler. Anglers have also been catching lots of 2 to 5-pound catfish using the same method.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Walleyes are good on twister tails. Bullhead fishing is good all over the lake, especially in the inlet area. Anglers are catching a few catfish.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): There is a good opportunity to catch 3 to 6 pound channel catfish at the lake. Crappie fishing is also good. There is excellent shoreline fishing access at Lake Pahoja. Fishing will continue to improve as the water warms.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Walleyes are fair in 20 to 25 feet of water using live bait.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): The water temperature is 57 degrees on the surface and the water remains unusually clear with visibility down to 5 feet. Yellow bass fishing is excellent on the nice days. The best action occurs when there is a slight chop on the water. Small jigs, minnows or cut bait are all catching 8 to 11 inch yellow bass. Walleye

fishing is slower. Some walleye are being caught yellow bass fishing. Rock reefs and the east shore are still holding walleye, but they have dispersed following the spawn. Bullhead fishing is excellent. Use night crawlers on the windy shorelines or the Ventura Grade fishing jetty. Bullhead sizes are excellent. Fish nearing a pound are common.

Beeds Lake (Franklin): Crappie fishing late afternoon into the evening has been good. Fish along the causeway and north shore jetties with small jigs or minnows. Crappies range from 7 to 10 inches.

Lower and Upper Pine Lakes (Hardin): Crappie fishing along the outside edges of downed trees is good. Use small jigs and minnows around the brush for best results.

Rice Lake (Winnebago): Bullhead fishing is excellent. Fish range from 7 to 10 inches.

Silver Lake (Worth): Bullhead fishing is good. Use night crawlers off the fishing jetty.

Morse Lake (Wright): Yellow perch are hitting minnows and small jigs. Fish 8 to 10 inches are available.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

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